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Analysis

OF A VOLUME IN TAMIL,

ENTITLED

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS

OF THE

PARABLES OF CHRIST,

AND OF THE

BRIEFER SIMILES,

EMPLOYED BY THE DIVINE TEACHER, IN ILLUSTRATING AND ENFORCING THE DOCTRINES AND DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

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ANALYSIS OF PARABLES.

PARABLE FIRST.

The Foolish Rich Man.

Luke xii. 16—21.

After a brief statement of the circumstances under which the parable was spoken, *undue attachment to worldly possessions* is shown to be foolish and dangerous: (1) *foolish*, for it does not secure that which all men seek, peace and happiness, but the reverse. Instances,—Solomon's experience as detailed in the book of Eccles. iii. 4—11. Allusion is also made to the ancient king who at his feasts fancied he saw a sword suspended by a hair above his head, and ready at any moment to fall and deprive him of life—(2) *dangerous*, for it is a direct violation of many explicit commands: (Col. iii. 2; Matt. vi. 33; 1 John ii. 15; &c.) and it often leads to the use of unjustifiable means for obtaining wealth. Instances, —Achan, Gehazi, Judas Iscariot, Ananias and Sapphira, &c.

Those of the *readers* who have property are enjoined to employ it in the Lord's service, and those who are *poor* are exhorted to be "content with such things as they have;" while to all is commended the injunction, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."

PARABLE SECOND.

The Marriage Feast.

Matthew xxii. 2—14; and Luke xiv. 16—24.

After a brief notice of the historical events connected with the original delivery of this parable, and the subjects

it was designed primarily to illustrate, the following general lessons of instruction are deduced.

1. How important and valuable are the blessings offered to mankind through the gospel of Christ! They pertain to this world and the next—to soul and body. The prophet Isaiah compared them to "a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined." Is. xxv. 6.

2. God has done all that is requisite for man's salvation. By the death of Christ His Son, the law has been satisfied, yea made honourable, and by His Spirit the heart may be sanctified, and prepared for an abode in a holy heaven. As He said of the Jews in the days of Isaiah, so He can say of the whole world, "What could have been done more that I have not done." All things are now ready.

3. It is both irrational and dangerous to reject the blessings God offers, and to revile His ministers. Such conduct deprived the Israelites of the Divine favour, and brought upon them the curse of God; and like conduct now will be attended by like results. (Heb. x. 28, 29.)

4. They who are finally lost will condemn themselves only. They alone are to blame. They will experience for ever the truth of the strong language recorded in the book of Prov. i. 24—27.

5. We must be careful lest worldly cares and business draw away our minds from an attention to the soul. It did so in the case of the persons mentioned in the parable. One went to his farm, another to his merchandise, &c. The danger still threatens, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" engage the attention; while God, and the soul and eternity are lightly esteemed, if not quite forgotten.

6. Inasmuch as some are members of the Christian church on earth who are not true Christians, it becomes all to examine themselves in the light of God's word. There was one at the feast who had not the wedding garment. So there are many now who "have a name to live yet are dead."

The readers are earnestly entreated in view of the fact that *all things are ready*, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to do it *now*.

A paraphrase of the excellent Hymn by the Rev. John Newton, "Sinner turn, why will ye die," occupies the last page.

PARABLE THIRD.

The Unmerciful Servant.

Matthew xviii. 23—35.

The occasion on which this parable was spoken having been stated, the *duty of cherishing a forgiving spirit* is illustrated by six considerations.

1. It is God-like. Psalm ciii. 8; Ex. xxxiv. 6.

2. It is in accordance with the revealed will of God. Mark xi. 25; Luke xvii. 3; 1 Thess. v. 15.

3. It is a condition of our being forgiven by God. James ii. 13; Luke vi. 37, 38.

4. It is reasonable. We err and need forgiveness from those whom we offend; we ought therefore to allow to others what we need from them.

5. It is necessary to our own peace of mind. An unforgiving spirit cannot but be unhappy.

6. It is necessary to our expecting the forgiveness of our fellow-men.

In reference to this spirit of forgiveness, we are to remember five things.

(1) It must be *from the heart.* Our Lord explicitly states this at the conclusion of the parable.

(2) It must not be withheld because of the *number* of the offences committed. Peter was commanded to forgive "seventy times seven," *i. e.* numberless faults.

(3) It must not be withheld because of the *magnitude* of the offences committed. What crimes were inflicted upon Christ and upon His servant Stephen! and yet both forgave their enemies in the hour of their greatest suffering. Luke xxiii. 34; Acts vii. 60.

(4) It must not be withheld because of the *causelessness* of the wrongs done. Here, too, we have the example of Christ and His disciples. John xix. 34.

(5) It must not be withheld because of the *absence of a like spirit on the part of the offender.* We must not allow his negligence of duty to be an excuse for our remissness.

N. B.—It is not to be understood that this duty of forgiveness precludes us from a right to see that gross offenders against our character, person or property, are punished by the legal authorities. The two duties do not clash.

Readers, especially those who are professed Christians,

are, in conclusion, counselled to cultivate and exhibit a spirit of forgiveness at all times after the example of Christ, in accordance with what every renewed heart cannot but feel is right, and in compliance with the reiterated exhortation of the apostles, especially of the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians iii. 8—13.

PARABLE FOURTH.

The Two Sons.

Matthew xxi. 28—31.

After a brief introduction explanatory of the circumstances that occasioned the delivery of the parable—and after a statement of the several similitudes introduced into the narrative, the following five lessons of instruction are brought to the reader's view.

1. God, the Father of all mankind, has placed each individual of the human family in the vineyard of this world, and has given him a work. The nature of that work may be gathered from the following among a multitude of like commands. Eccles. xii. 13; Matt. iv. 10; Rom. vi. 13; 1 Cor. vi. 20; Gal. vi. 10; John i. 36.

2. It is the duty of all mankind to attend *without delay* to the service assigned to them. See Josh. xxiv. 15; Heb. iv. 7; Eccles. ix. 10.

3. The language and conduct of the elder son—"I *will not go*, but afterwards *repented and went*"—find their parallel in the thoughts, feelings and conduct of all true Christians. Examples,—David, (Psalm cxix. 59, 60.) Manasseh, (2 Chron. iv. 9, 23.) Paul, (Gal. i. 13—23.)

N. B.—We here see the nature of true repentance. It consists in *reflection*, *grief*, and *forsaking of sin*.

4. The language and conduct of the younger son—"I *go* sir, but *went not*,"—answers to that of many members of the family of man. They are *always promising* but *never performing*.

The *readers* are then asked to which of these two sons they are comparable? If conscious that they are like the younger, they are urged to commence the service of their Heavenly Parent *without delay.*

PARABLE FIFTH.

The Pharisee and Publican.

Luke xviii. 10—14.

After a notice of the sects existing among the Jews during the time of Christ's abode on earth, and a statement of the circumstances that gave rise to this parable; and after a notice of the different ways in which men seek that most desirable of all gifts—the mercy of God—the defects of the Pharisee's righteousness, and the features in the character of the Publican that met the Divine approval, are stated in full.

As to the *Pharisee*, he was proud and self-righteous, both which dispositions of heart are opposed to the precepts of God's word, contrary to the experience of the truly converted soul, and an obstacle to the enjoyment of the Divine blessing. Prov. xxi. 4; xvi. 5; James iv. 6; Psalm cxxxviii. 6.

As to the *Publican*, he was humble and contrite. His language corresponded with that of David in Psalm xxv. 7, cix. 26, cxix. 124, cxxx. 3.

The consequence that resulted from these different states of heart was, that the Publican was justified (pardoned), and the Pharisee returned to his home without God's blessing, but, as we may suppose, with an accumulated load of guilt resting upon his soul.

As the subject is peculiarly appropriate to the Hindoos, the application is full, touching the means employed in this land to obtain justification; and the readers are earnestly entreated to pursue that only course which can enable them to gain what they desire.

PARABLE SIXTH.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

Luke xvi. 9—31.

The historical circumstances attendant upon the delivery of this parable being stated, the following practical lessons are dwelt upon.

1. All men, without reference to age, or rank, *must die.*

It so occurred to both the persons named in this parable. See Gen. iii. 19; Psalm lxxxix. 48; Eccles. viii. 8; Rom. vi. 23; Heb. ix. 27.

2. Immediately upon the death of the body the soul will enter a world of happiness or of misery. The Scriptures are entirely silent as respects any such place as *purgatory*. Christ said to the thief "*to-day* shalt thou be with me in Paradise." (Luke xxiii. 43.) The state of the two persons mentioned in this parable appears to have been settled *at once*.

3. How dreadful is the misery of hell! Of all suffering that from *thirst* is most excruciating. This sufferer was denied a *drop of water*. One circumstance that imparted wretchedness to the rich man in hell was, the loss of all that he enjoyed while on earth. *Here*, he was *rich; there, poor!* Again, a desire to leave that abode and enter heaven, but the entire impossibility of so doing. His state was unalterably fixed. Again, a recollection of what he had enjoyed, and might now possess—and lastly, a feeling that his example might lead some of his friends to ruin. All these entered into the misery of *his* situation as it does of *all* who are doomed to that world of woe.

4. How great is the happiness of heaven! The expressions "in Abraham's bosom" was to the Jews significant of great honour and blessedness. To this our Lord alludes in Matt. viii. 11. As to the greatness of the bliss of heaven, the following passages throw some light upon this lofty theme. Psalm xvi. 11, xvii. 15; Rev. xxii. 3, 4, 5.

5. Riches alone cannot save, nor can poverty alone destroy the soul! This the parable plainly teaches. But we are not to suppose that riches will *necessarily* destroy or poverty save the spirit. Many rich men go to heaven and many poor are lost. *Faith alone* can save, and *want of faith* alone banish the soul to darkness.

6. They who fancy that if one but rise from the dead and speak to them they would believe, are mistaken. The parable is explicit upon that point. There are other instances in confirmation of the same. Lazarus rose from the dead and yet the people sought to kill him, (John xii. 10.) Christ rose from the dead and yet the Jews did not believe. The Bible is sufficient, and he who will not believe it will be affected by nothing else.

7. We cannot determine as to a person's being the friend or enemy of God, by the possession or absence of worldly property. Psalm lxxiii. 3, 5, 7, 12, 16, 17.

The *readers* are earnestly invited to consider these important truths, and to seek God's favour which is life, and His loving kindness which is better than life.

PARABLE SEVENTH.

The Talents.

Matthew xxv. 14—30.

The occasion on which the parable was spoken being stated, and the points of original similitude detailed, the following talents or *means of doing good* are named as being those that God has committed—all to some, and a part to others—and which He expects them to employ in His service, viz. *reason*, *knowledge*, *power of speech*, *property* and *influence.* The nature of each is explained, and the readers are called upon to examine themselves as to how far they possess them, and to what extent they are using them for the end designed by the Divine Disposer of these and all other blessings.

The reward that was granted to the faithful steward, and the punishment awarded to the one who was negligent, are held up, the one as an encouragement to faithfulness, and the other as a warning against indolence.

PARABLE EIGHTH.

Hid Treasure and Pearl of Great Price.

Matthew xiii. 45, 46.

The "Pearl" and the "Treasure," mean Christ and the blessings that accompany faith in Him; the "field" signifies the Scriptures; and the readiness of the merchant to part with all his other possessions to obtain this "Pearl" and "Treasure," denote the willingness of all who feel the need of salvation to part with all else to secure it.

A pearl is a fit emblem of Christ on three accounts—it is *beautiful*, *rare*, *and enriches all who possess it.* So with regard to Christ, (1) He centres in Himself all possible excellence. He was Immanuel—the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person. (2) He never had His equal. Different individuals who have dwelt on earth have possessed certain rare qualities of mind and heart, but Christ possessed all these and infinitely more. (3) All who can call Him by faith their's are rich for time and eternity. To them are revealed blessings

numberless and appropriate. All needed temporal favours, (Matt. vi. 33.) Pardon of sin, (Rom. viii. 1.) Wisdom, (John viii. 12.) Peace of mind, (John xiv. 27.) Power to conquer spiritual adversaries, (Is. lix. 19.) Grace in the dying hour, (Hos. xiii. 14.) Mercy in the day of judgment, (Matt. xxv. 34.) Happiness in eternity, (Rev. xxii. 5.) He who possesses these things is rich though destitute of all worldly wealth.

The attention of the reader is then directed to a few subjects of special importance.

(1) A knowledge of Christ and the blessings He came to secure to men is contained in the *Bible*, and in *that book alone* as the treasure was hid in the field. John v. 39.

(2) The man, probably, owned the land sometime before he found the treasure; so many possess the Bible for a long time before they know what treasures of wisdom, grace, and blessedness it contains.

(3) So soon as he found this Pearl and Treasure he sold all else to obtain them; so when the excellence of Christ is seen by the eye of faith, the sinner will part with sinful practices, self-righteousness, worldly-mindedness, evil associates, covetousness, and all other things he prizes, to secure this greatest of all blessings.

(4) This Pearl of great price—Christ—is to be obtained *by faith.*

Let all seek for its obtainment in the way appointed. Then shall they be rich for time and for eternity.

PARABLE NINTH.

The Sower.

Matthew xiii. 3—8.

After a few introductory observations upon the fact that many hear the Gospel both occasionally and regularly, who are in no way benefitted thereby, attributable to the manner in which they hear; and after a brief statement of the circumstances connected with the delivery of the parable, it is remarked that an expressed ignorance of its meaning induced the Divine Teacher himself to explain its several parts. (1) The seed is "the word of God"—revealed truth. (2) The sower is the teacher of the Gospel. (3) The different kinds of soil represent the different kind of persons who hear the Gospel. These are,

First—*Way-side hearers.* This is explained in ver. 19. They hear without attention, without previous prayer and without a desire to be benefitted. Curiosity, custom, the wishes of friends, these and like motives induce them to listen to what the preacher may have to say. They hear as though they heard not. "The devil catcheth away the seeds sown in their heart." The fault is their's, however, for if *resisted* he would have fled away. (James iv. 17.)

Second—*The stony ground hearers*, explained in ver. 20, 21, to mean those who are greatly pleased with the Gospel when they first hear it. Their minds are full of delight, and their zeal warmly awakened, but they have not the root of faith. They are not true Christians. They have not seen their guilt and danger, and the true excellence of Christ; consequently so soon as the scorching rays of reproach and persecution beat upon them, they deny Christ, and return to their evil habits. Their piety withers away.

Third—The *thorns* among which a part of the seed fell, represent cares, anxieties, and the deceitful lure of riches, significant of those who while they hear the Gospel, allow their thoughts to be upon the pleasures or the business of the world. These prevent the Gospel from producing its legitimate effects. The word is choked and becomes unfruitful.

Fourth—A part of the seed fell on *good ground.* This is explained in ver. 23, to mean those who when they hear the Gospel *understand it*, *retain it in their memories*, and *practise it.* They bear the fruit of *piety towards God* and *benevolence towards men.*

The *readers* of the exposition are admonished as to the manner in which it is their duty and privilege to hear the Gospel preached. They are encouraged by an assurance of the benefits they will derive if they hear it with attention, seriousness, faith, prayer, and a spirit of obedience. They are warned of the consequences of listening with carelessness, worldliness, and unbelief. In one case it will be, through Divine grace, a *savour of life*—in the other, a *savour of death.* All are enjoined to ponder well the injunction, " Take heed how ye hear."

PARABLE TENTH.

The Barren Fig Tree.

Luke xiii. 6—9.

After glancing at the *circumstances* that gave rise to the parable, the *truth* it was designed to illustrate, and the *points of original similitude*, the following practical thoughts are suggested and enforced.

1. God has placed all men in the vineyard of this world, and having afforded them the means for so doing, has commanded them to bring forth the fruits of holy feelings and conduct. Examples, Matt. xxii. 37; Psalm cv. 2; 1 Cor. vi. 22; Rom. vi. 13; Psalm cxvi. 12, 13, 14.

2. Though men have long continued barren of good works, if they will begin to "fear God and keep His commandments," He will withhold the rod of His chastisement and will bless them.

3. If men continue obstinately determined to withhold from God the love and service that are His due—if they remain barren trees in the vineyard of the Lord—He will at length cut them down as cumberers of the ground.

4. The punishment of the wicked will, in the last day, be approved by themselves and by the assembled world.

Readers are then urged to consider whether they are fruitful in the good works that God claims and has a right to. If they are conscious of so doing, they are entreated to render all the praise to Divine grace; and if not, they are warned of their danger, and entreated now to commence a life of practical piety.

PARABLE ELEVENTH.

The Importunate Widow.

Luke xviii. 2—6.

This exposition is devoted to the important subject of *prayer*. The subject is treated in the form of question and answer. The questions are

1. *What* is prayer?

2. With what *dispositions of heart* must prayer be offered?

3. *Reasons* for prayer?
4. For *what things* must men pray?
5. For *whom* must they pray?
6. *Where* must they pray?
7. *When* must they pray?
8. In *what ways* does God answer prayer?
9. What *instances* are recorded in the Bible of prayer, and the manner of their answer?
10. What *advantages* are secured by prayer?
11. What *losses* will follow an inattention to this duty?

Two classes of readers are then addressed, those who are in the habit of prayer, and they are urged to take heed lest from any circumstances their prayers *be hindered;* and the *prayerless*, who are warned of their danger, and assured that there is a time coming when they will pray; it is when they call to the mountains and rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the face of the Lamb. But they are entreated not to let such be their unhappy portion, but to commence *now* the duty of *prayer*, that when they leave the world, *praise* may employ their tongues forever.

PARABLE TWELFTH.

The Unjust Steward.

Luke xvi. 1—8.

This parable inculcates three important truths—1, that God has entrusted all men with opportunities or means of doing good; 2, that they should be as zealous in the employment of these means for the end designed, as men of the world are in using facilities at their command for realizing pecuniary profit; 3, that the blessings they shall hereafter enjoy will be proportionate to the diligence that characterizes their use of the opportunities of doing good now possessed.

The leading thought of the parable—that *men are less zealous in the concerns of their souls than of their bodies*, is illustrated by a number of instances. For example,—a man in danger earnest to escape from harm—a young man seeking to be wise and learned—another wishing to be rich, &c. But it is not so in matters pertaining to *eternity*. The mind knows what is right, but the heart will not feel or the hands act in accordance with that knowledge. Men are wise for time and irrational for eternity.

The *danger* of such a course is pointed out, and the readers are urged to avoid a line of conduct which, if pursued in relation to their temporal concerns, would send them to the mad house ; but to be wise for time and eternity, and that by seeking, through Christ, pardon, holiness and heaven.

PARABLE THIRTEENTH.

The Good Samaritan.

Luke x. 30—37.

The unwillingness of mankind to acknowledge themselves sinners, being stated and illustrated in the case of the young man, whose question opened the way for the delivery of this parable, the following truths are enforced.

1. No one can see himself as he *is morally*, except he compare himself with the law of God. (Rom. iii. 7 ; vii. 7.) But many mistake by contrasting themselves with the notoriously vile, and thus arriving at a conclusion favourable to themselves but in fact false. This the Apostle Paul condemns in his 2d Epistle to the Cor. xi. 12. The law of God takes cognizance of the *heart* as well as overt acts, and as the deformities on the face are not known until the person views himself in a mirror, so these may be kept from notice until the sinner looks into the perfect standard—the Divine word. Then he will not, like the young man who came to Christ, speak of the care with which he has kept the whole law, but will rather, like the publican, exclaim "God be merciful to me a sinner."

2. The true friends of God are ever ready to do good as they have opportunity. Mercy is one of the Divine attributes. (Ps. cxix. 68 ; Matt. v. 45.) Such being the character and conduct of God, all who expect to enjoy His favour now and ever, must in this respect be like Him. So with Christ, he was ever employed in *doing good* to friends and foes. (Acts x. 38.) But Paul says that "Whoever has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his." (Rom. viii. 9.) On this subject of doing good, the Apostle has left one most important command, "*Let us do good unto all men as we have opportunity*," &c. (Gal. vi. 10 ; Heb. xiii. 16.) How different was the conduct of the Priest and Levite mentioned in this parable from that of God, who mercifully *sent* to *him* the Samaritan, and from that of Christ while on earth, and Paul on all similar occasions! These men most plainly

showed that whatever they might be nominally and externally, they had not the Spirit of God, and were none of His.

3. They who truly pity the suffering will give them assistance when they are in want. There are two kinds of mercy—true and false. The *truly merciful* will follow the Samaritan's example; they will *do* good. The *falsely merciful* will feel sorrowful, but will, like the Priest and Levite, look and then *pass by*. Of this the Apostle James speaks, (ii. 15, 16.) If Christ had shown but *this kind* of mercy, what would have become of our world? A mercy that is not strong enough to constrain its possessor to *act* as well as *think*, and *feel* and *speak*, is sadly defective. True mercy will extend to supplying the wants of the *soul* as well as meeting the wants of the *body*.

Readers are reminded of the concluding exhortation, "*go and do thou likewise.*" Care is to be taken lest charity be given to the unworthy and indolent. That must be left to the individual's judgment. To the unmerciful there are threatenings. (Prov. xxi. 13)—but to the merciful, *promises.* (2 Cor. ix. 7; Prov. xi. 25.) See the experience of Job xxix. 13—1.

N. B. *Charity* will not save the soul! *faith* is the only means of salvation. Hindus make a great mistake on this subject (some of their good deeds named). Merciful deeds are but the *fruits of faith.*

Let not the *poor* think they *can do nothing.* Though without money they can by kind words and the like accomplish much. Christ, though without wealth, "went about doing good." To follow His example in this and all respects, is a duty and privilege.

PARABLE FOURTEENTH.

Mustard Seed and Leaven.

Matthew xiii. 31, 32, 33.

Two important truths are illustrated by this parable.

1. Whenever a person becomes a Christian, the thoughts of his mind and feelings of his heart undergo an immediate and marked change. The natural dispositions of the heart, as described by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians, v. 19, 20, 21, are supplanted by the opposite affections of humility, peace, love, &c.; old things have passed away and all things have become *new.* (2 Cor. viii. 17; and iii. 18.) As to the *mode* in which this change is effected,

we are ignorant. Our Lord compares it to the invisible wind, the *effects* of which are alone known to us. Instance the great change effected in the Apostle Paul and others.

2. The religion of Christ is constantly progressing in the hearts of true Christians and in the world. (1) The change spoken of before as effected in the hearts of Christians, does not become entire *at once.* It is gradual, like the leaven that by degrees diffuses itself through the mass. There are other comparisons exhibiting the same. Example—a child gradually advances to manhood. Again—the blade, ear and full corn. Again—the sun that "shines brighter and brighter." But the change is constantly going forward till at death it becomes perfect. (2) As the religion of Christ is ever advancing in the heart of each believer, so it is always going forward in *the world at large.* The world was *created* by the Divine will. It was quickly accomplished. "He spake and it was done." (Ps. xxxiii. 9.) And so He *could* renovate and sanctify it. But He has determined otherwise. It is by the dissemination of Gospel truth, accompanied by the Holy Spirit's power,.that the world is to be redeemed from sin. (Then follows a brief sketch of its onward progress from the days of Christ to this hour among different nations.)

Those who may *read* the exposition are earnestly exhorted to *examine themselves* whether this great change has been effected in their thoughts, feelings, and conduct: and also to join now with those who are urging forward the cause of Christ, that they may share with Him the glory of *victory*, and not feel the shame and terror of *defeat!*

PARABLE FIFTEENTH.

Lost Sheep, Lost Money, and Prodigal Son.

Luke xv. 1—24.

These three parables are considered as *one*, illustrating as they do the *same important truths.* After a brief view of the place in which this parable was spoken, and the circumstances that gave rise to its delivery—the following points of practical interest are considered.

1. The "Lost sheep," "Lost money," and "Prodigal son," significantly represent the situation and characters of men since the apostacy. The Prodigal son is more especially dwelt upon; and here we notice, (1) His unwillingness to bear restraint. (2) His receiving the portion of his father's property as if he had a right to it; "*Give me the portion.*"

Here was *no gratitude.* (3) His using the property given to him for self-gratification, without any reference to the will or honour of his father. All of which features find their counterpart in the feelings and conduct of all men in reference to God their Heavenly Father. (Each is dwelt upon.)

2. They who wander from the path of piety, and like the Prodigal, pursue a course of self-gratification, regardless of Him who gave them what they enjoy, are *dissatisfied* and *unhappy.* This young man fancied that if away from his Father's house he should be happy; but oh, how sadly disappointed! Just so with the sinner. (See Isa. lvii. 20, 21. Rom. iii. 17.) King Solomon in the midst of all his luxuries exclaimed, "All is vanity." To the righteous *only* is there true peace. (Ps. xxix. 11, last clause; lxxxv. 8, middle clause; Prov. iii. 17.) The inhabitants of heaven are happy *because they are holy.* Such must man become ere he can expect to enjoy true peace.

3. Those described above, are not only destitute of true *peace*, but also of *true wisdom.* This idea is suggested by the phrase, "He came to himself." And did not his whole conduct denote the want of an enlightened mind? So, too, it may be said of all men. Says the prophet, "Madness is in the hearts of men while they live." What more striking instance of insanity can be named than that of an immortal being, careless whether that immortality be passed in joy or woe? heaven offered, and yet not accepted. But this is the case with all men naturally wise for time, and insane for eternity.

4. So soon as the Prodigal "came to himself," he began to think of a variety of subjects. (1) Of the abundance in his father's house. (2) Of his own poverty; and these thoughts constrained him (3) to determine upon a return. Here we see the sinner under conviction. He thinks of what God has in his power to bestow—of his own spiritually impoverished state—and he exclaims, "I will return. If I perish, I perish."

5. So soon as his father saw his son returning, he had compassion, &c. (verses 22. 23. 24, are dwelt upon.) How significant of the feelings of God toward penitent sinners. He delights to pardon. Hear these promises. (Isa. lv. 7; Ps. xxx. 7; Isa. i. 8.) Surely we must exclaim, "God is love!"

Readers are urged to hold up this mirror and look at themselves. They who have, as they trust, returned to their father's house, are urged to "Praise the Lord"—and they who are yet far away, are entreated to follow the example of this Prodigal, being assured, that God "waits to be gracious," and that "there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

PARABLE SIXTEENTH.

The Labourers in the Vineyard.

Matthew xx. 1—16.

This parable though spoken almost 2000 years ago, is addressed to us of the present day. Several points of similarity being briefly stated, the following *practical thoughts* are then deduced and dwelt upon.

1. They who enter the church of Christ must *labour* for their Divine Master. The nature of the work required is obvious to all who read the Bible. Indolence is opposed to the nature, the will, and the commands of God. When Jehovah placed the first man He created in Eden, He gave him work to perform. So of the Church. He allows no idlers. (See Matt. xii. 30; Gal. vi. 10; 1 Cor. vi. 20; &c.) The spirit of Christ is a spirit of *active benevolence*, and the person who is without that spirit, may have a "name to live," but he is in truth *dead*. As Christ ever "went about doing good," so must His disciples do—like the sun they must ever be *imparting good*.

2. As the keeper of the vineyard ceased not to call others into his vineyard, when a few had entered; so God is ever urging mankind to enter upon His service. This He does by the *Bible*, by His *providences*, by His *ministers*, and by His *Spirit*. He begins to call when men are *young*, and if they hear *then* he is specially pleased. He usually continues to call till death closes the door of mercy. Delay, however, is, on many accounts, *dangerous*.

3. The labourers received not their wages till the day closed and their work was complete; so a Christian must continue in the Lord's service "to the end" of life, and then if "faithful," he shall receive the crown. Let it not be supposed that the servants of Christ are *entitled to* wages as is a soldier or a servant. What he receives is a *gracious gift*. But God will not forget his labours of love, and what he receives will be proportionate to what he does.

4. God has a right to act towards men as He pleases. Men have no right to take exceptions to His decisions. These labourers did this and their Master reproved them. The Jews did and the Apostle Paul censured them. (Romans ix. 14, 15, 21—24.) God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. None can say "what doest thou."

5. Many who enjoy great advantages, derive less advantage therefrom than they whose privileges are less, but

who are more diligent in their improvement. Examples,—the Jews and Gentiles. So is it now with individuals.

Readers are then urged to self-examination whether they are doing anything for Christ and His cause; and if conscious they are *not*, to enter upon His service *without delay.* Such a course is duty, and connected with it are blessings rich beyond expression or thought.

PARABLE SEVENTEENTH.

The Ten Virgins.

Matthew xxv. 1—13.

The simile here employed is well understood by the people of this land.

The "virgins" represent the members of the Christian church. The "foolish virgins" denote those who "have a name to live but are dead." The "wise virgins," those who truly "fear God and keep His commandments;" the former have but the *lamp of profession*, the latter have with that lamp the *oil of Divine grace.*

Again the "bridegroom tarried," so in like manner some time usually passes between conversion and death. Why are Christians detained on earth after they are ready to go to heaven? (1) That they may become holier; (2) that they may *do good* to their fellow-men; and (3) that they may be *assured* that they *are* what they profess and hope they are; (each thought is enlarged upon.)

Again, the bridegroom came at an *unexpected time*, so few men (even among true Christians) are *waiting* for the event of death—except in special cases men are *taken* by a greater or less degree of surprise. But *mark* the difference between the true and nominal Christian—the former is surprised but he is *ready*—he trims his lamp "and goes forth." The latter is both amazed and unprepared. How doleful his state. A lamp is in his hand but no oil is in it—he is in darkness—a sad presage of what is to be his eternal destiny.

Again, these foolish virgins at once begged for oil from their wiser associates. A painful emblem of what the dying sinner is ready to do. He calls for a minister or a pious friend to do that for him which he should long since have himself done—but *mark*, they had none to spare, and so with Christians—even though they could give away faith, holiness, &c., they have no more than they themselves need.

Again, the "door was shut"—painfully significant of the closing of the gates of heaven against those who, while on earth, remained impenitent and unbelieving.

Readers are then appealed to concerning the solemn truth here suggested, lest they at length hear that heart-rending sentence "I know you not."

PARABLE EIGHTEENTH.

The Wheat and the Tares.

Matthew xiii. 24—30.

This parable is instructive to all, but particularly to *members of the Christian church.* Its meaning our Lord himself explained to his disciples. This explanation is given in verses 37 to 43 inclusive. The parable is designed to illustrate the present moral state of the *world* and of the *church;* without the light thrown upon the subjects by the Bible, we should inquire in vain as to the reason why sin entered the world—why it continues—and what will be the result? But when we open this book all is plain. It gives an account of the moral state and prospects of all mankind.

Again, as to the *church.* It contains two classes of persons—true and false professors. Self-deceived persons or conscious hypocrites gain admission by deceptive means into almost every church—this is particularly the case in this land. The net when cast draws in good and bad fish. (See Matt. xiii. 47—56.) This cannot be avoided, as those who guard the doors of entrance to the church are not omniscient. It is not strange that they are deceived, since even Satan at times appears as an "angel of light."

Again, a reaping time is coming. All may appear alike now, but a division is to take place. This is graphically described in Matt. xxv. Then it will appear to the assembled universe who are the Lord's in truth, and who in name alone.

Readers are called upon to ascertain so far as possible to which class they individually belong, and if on the wrong side, to flee for safety to their Redeemer and Saviour.

PARABLE NINETEENTH.

The Good Shepherd.

John x. 1—5.

Though this parable appears to us very plain, yet they to whom it was addressed understood not its import. Our Lord very graciously explained it to them in verses 7 to 18 of this chapter. The following lessons of instructions are derived and enforced.

1. There is but one way of entering the true church on earth, and the heavenly church above, and that way is *Christ!* (See John xiv. 6; Acts iv. 12; and v. 31; Gal. iii. 26.) Christ is to mankind now what the brazen serpent was to the bitten Israelites.

2. We are here made acquainted with the evidences of our being members of Christ's church—sheep of His fold.

First. They hear the voice of Christ loud though the calls of public opinion, custom, natural inclination, &c., may be. Their question ever is "Lord what wilt *thou* have me to do?" "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Second. Wherever Christ bids them there they are to be seen. The character of that way, smooth or rough, does not affect them.

Third. Christ is their one example, their guide at all times.

3. We here see the blessedness of true Christians:—*First*, Christ who is God "knows" them; not simply as one friend knows another—but in the way of *protection*. (See Ps. i. 6; 2 Eph. ii. 19; Nah. i. 7.) He knew Noah, Lot, Daniel, and Paul, and was their protection in the midst of danger, and so of all his people. *Second*, he will give them *eternal life*. How beautifully is this described in the 23d Psalm. (The whole Psalm quoted.)

4. Christians should adore the *love of Christ*. He laid down his life and that *voluntarily* for them.

5. The blessings of Christianity are intended for all nations —all are called into the fold. Not the Jews alone (as they fancied) but those of other nations. So it has been, and will continue to be.

6. Those who are true Christians constitute *one family*. Let not jealousy, caste, bitterness, dwell there, but *brotherly love*.

Readers are urged to be deaf to the call of all false

teachers, and to hear the Good Shepherd—to put themselves under His guidance and thus enjoy His salvation.

PARABLE TWENTIETH.

The Wicked Husbandmen.

Matt. xxi. 33—43. Mark xii. 1—12. Luke xx. 9—19.

Our Lord intended by this parable to show to the Jews the wickedness of their conduct towards the Prophets, and the ruinous consequences attendant thereon. The points of resemblance are plain. The Householder is God. The Vineyard was the Jewish nation. The refusal of these husbandmen to render to the Householder the lawful proceeds of the field, represented the Jews barren of all good works. The servants sent by the Householder answered to the Prophets sent by God. Their conduct towards those servants was one with that of the Jews towards the Prophets, &c. But their conduct brought with it *ruin.*

We see here—

First. The long-suffering and justice of God!

Second. It becomes those who enjoy privileges to improve them *at once*, lest they be taken away.

Third. God still sends his servants to declare His will and determination.

Readers are told that if such conduct of the Jews towards Christ exposed them to the Divine displeasure, they cannot expect to escape, if they continue without faith, through which alone is eternal life.

PARABLE TWENTY-FIRST.

The Two Foundations.

Matthew vii. 24—27.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of the Gospel by Matthew are a casket of precious gems. Were the rest of the Bible lost, it would, with these remaining, be the most valuable book the world ever saw. (In illustration of this a variety of texts collated from these three chapters are inserted.)

The parables teaches—

1. That merely *hearing* the Gospel preached will not suffice for the soul's salvation. (Epistle to the Romans ii. 13; James i. 22, 23, 24.) This truth is farther enforced by a variety of familiar instances. The sick man *hearing* of a remedy and not using it. The poor man *hearing* of a road to wealth and not walking in it, &c. The devils know what is right, but will not do it. The bitten Israelites must *look* to the brazen serpent ere they could be healed—*hearing* of its erection was not enough. So of Christ He must be *believed* and followed, or the salvation He came to procure will be of no avail.

2. How *safe* are all who truly believe in Christ and faithfully follow Him. They are like a house on a *rock*. The devil, afflictions, temptations of the ungodly, the allurements of the world, all strive to destroy him, but he resists all with such considerations as are contained in Matt. viii. 9; James iv. 7; Job ii. 10; Sam. iii. 39; Heb. xii. 6; Job xiii. 15; Prov. xi. 4; and xxiii. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 10; 1 John ii. 15; 1 Cor. vii. 21. These precepts and promises have, through Divine grace, enabled the martyrs and the persecuted of every age and clime to stand firm and not to deny Christ though the heaviest storms of human wrath were beating upon them.

3. How *dangerous* the state of the unbelieving and ungodly. They are like a house on the *sand*. They have no strength of their own to meet temptations and trials, and the promises are not theirs. They are exposed to dangers that will prove their eternal ruin.

Readers are urged to commit their souls to Christ, through whom alone is salvation, and who alone can give it a place among the "spirits of just men made perfect."

ANALYSIS OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

FIRST ILLUSTRATION.

The Beam and Mote.

Matthew vii. 3, 4, 5.

The object here aimed at is to reprove the too common habit of condemning others for faults of which we ourselves are, to an equal if not greater degree, guilty. Not that we must be conscious of *perfect innocence* ere we rebuke sin, but we must not be wilful and habitual transgressors. (See Rom. ii. 2—22; and xiv. 4; also Matt. vii. 1.) As to the faults of others towards ourselves, we must remember that our forgiveness of them is a condition of being forgiven by God for the numberless sins committed against Him.

SECOND ILLUSTRATION.

The Lighted Candle.

Luke viii. 16, 17.

One of the consequences of the apostacy is *ignorance* upon a variety of subjects. The Gospel is the light that dispels that darkness. That light is designed for all the race. They, therefore, who receive it are to give it to others. Said Christ to the restored demoniac, "Go home to thy friends and tell them," &c. Mark v. 19. Again He said "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matt. x. 8; see also 1 Cor. ix. 16; and Rev. xxii. 17.) Every Christian should be to the community in which he lives like a lighted candle in a dark room. If he be not so, he denies his Master, and is unworthy of the name he bears.

THIRD ILLUSTRATION.

The Good and Bad Trees.

Luke vi. 43—45.

We have here tests of moral character—characteristics of the righteous and unrighteous. All men naturally bring forth the bad *fruits* of pride, envy, ambition, selfishness and the like—but when a new heart is given to them, they at once become fruitful in the good works of faith, humility, peace, holiness, &c. By these tests it becomes all Christians often to try themselves, to see whether they are in *truth* what they are by *profession*.

FOURTH ILLUSTRATION.

Blade, Ear, and Full Corn.

Mark iv. 28.

This illustration suggests the following thoughts. (1) Grace in the heart, like seed in the ground, will not lie concealed, but will manifest itself in holy conduct. (2) The mode of its operation, like the springing up of seed, is a mystery. (John iii. 13.) (3) Divine grace does not at *once* change all the feelings of the heart. The work—like the blade, ear and full corn, is gradual. (See Phil. iii. 12; Prov. iv. 18.) Here, too, are evidences of Christian character by which we should often test the nature of our hope.

FIFTH ILLUSTRATION.

Little Child.

Matthew xviii. 2, 3.

This act of Christ's corrected the erroneous opinions of the Jews as to the real nature of His kingdom. It was to be one not of worldly *exaltation* but of *humility*, and the feeling that was enjoined upon all the subjects of that kingdom was simplicity and humility—the disposition of a child. The same is inculcated by repeated revealed precepts. (See Ps. cxlix. 4; Is. lxvi. 2; Jer. xlv. 5; and the parable of the

Pharisee and Publican.) The existence or absence of this spirit is undoubted evidence of fitness, or otherwise to enter heaven.

SIXTH ILLUSTRATION.

Happy Servant.

Luke xii. 42—46.

The members of the Christian church are here compared to servants, whose duty it is to be ever diligent and watchful. But how many, alas! are not so, but live with but little regard to the duties they owe to their Divine Master, and less thought of His coming to receive their account. All such faithless, indolent ones will be treated as His enemies, while they alone who are "faithful unto death shall receive a crown of life." The service in which Christians are engaged is most honourable and noble. It is one with that of angels who are "ministering spirits."

SEVENTH ILLUSTRATION.

Different Gates and Ways.

Matthew vii. 13, 14.

We are here reminded of three important truths. (1) It is an easy thing to descend to hell, and a difficult one to ascend to heaven. The former is a "wide way," the latter "narrow and strait." The former requires us but to sit still and go with the tide; the latter to be earnest and resist the current of our natural inclinations and desires, as also the customs, prejudice and fashions of the world. Our position is similar to that of the Israelites who were required to *fight* ere entering and possessing Canaan. (2) The number who at present enter heaven is small, while multitudes sink to hell. (3) All men naturally are in the broad way to destruction. If conscious we are there, we should leave it and enter the path that leads to heaven. Thus doing we shall be happy *now* and *forever*.

EIGHTH ILLUSTRATION.

Strong Man Armed.

Luke xi. 21, 22.

This "*Strong man armed*" is Satan. He is called Abaddon, descriptive of his strength and cruelty. (Rev. ix. 11.) The "*palace*" is the heart of man in which the adversary dwells, until expelled by the *stronger than he*, i. e. Christ. Here is a question for self-examination. If Christ is reigning in our hearts, we are daily obeying His commandments and doing His will. If Satan is there, then are we his slaves. Which is it?

NINTH ILLUSTRATION.

The Obedient Servant.

Luke xvii. 7—10.

The idea of debt and credit that some seem to attach to the spiritual transactions that pass between man and God, is most erroneous and dishonourable. Man is a debtor to God, but God cannot—tradesman like—be in man's debt. Every duty that God requires of man should be done with all possible vigour. If he is to *love God*, it must be "with all his mind—heart—soul—and strength." If he is to do good, it must be "with all *his might*," and so of other duties. The utmost *energy* is enjoined. The idea of doing more than God requires is impossible. The true Christian cannot but feel this. He knows that he does but *his duty*, and he feels that God is worthy of infinitely more than he can, with all his diligence, render.

TENTH ILLUSTRATION.

The Single Eye.

Luke xi. 34—36.

As the eye is perfect or diseased, the vision will be correct or erroneous—so if the mind be in a healthy state its efforts at discerning truth and entertaining right feelings will be successful; while if under the dominion of pride, envy,

selfishness and like passions, it is in an unfit state for examining Divine truth, and it cannot but be led into error. "The *meek* will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach his way." So of other dispositions. They are essential to a healthful exercise of the mental and moral powers.

ELEVENTH ILLUSTRATION.

Blind Leading the Blind.

Luke vi. 39.

Not more plain is it, that if one blind man attempt to lead another who is blind, that both will go into danger, than that a man who teaches error will involve himself and his disciples in ruin. It was so with the Jewish doctors. It was so with Mohammed and his disciples. It is so with the Brahmans. All who attempt to teach should first be sure that they know what is truth, and all who desire to learn should go for instruction to the really wise. To all we say, go to Christ the Divine, and be guided by the instruction of His word—go also to His ministers who preach in His name.

TWELFTH ILLUSTRATION.

New and Old Cloth, and New and Old Bottles.

Luke v. 36—38.

There is a fitness and propriety in all things, (Ec. iii. 1,) and we should study it. The Pharisees would have Christ's disciples fast and mourn while He was with them. But *no*, says our Lord, wait till I leave them and then they can fast. "A time for every thing, and every thing in its time," is an old proverb. Talk not to a drunkard of his sin while *intoxicated*, or to an angry man of his temper while *enraged*. Study to learn not only *what to do*, but *when and how to do it*. On this and all subjects Divine wisdom is needed; which will be granted if asked for with humility and faith.

THIRTEENTH ILLUSTRATION.

Living Water.

John iv. 14.

Of all created things, none is more necessary and useful to man than water. On this account, and that too of its natural purity, it is a fit emblem of Christ. (See Isa. xliv. 3—5.) It is in vain to go for satisfaction to the broken cisterns of worldly pleasures. They are all empty. But we must go to Christ. He is a well-spring of life—they who drink of the water He gives, even His grace, will never thirst.

FOURTEENTH ILLUSTRATION.

Vine and the Branches.

John xv. 1—8.

The following thoughts are here suggested.

1. There is a close union between Christ and His disciples—He is the head, they the members—He the Teacher, they the pupils. (1 Cor. xii. 12, 27; Rom. viii. 1; &c.)

2. Christians must, therefore, ever look to Christ for spiritual life and strength. What is a branch when broken from the tree, or the arm when severed from the body. So is a Christian without Christ. Said our Lord to His disciples, "Without *me* ye can do nothing."

3. The branches of a living tree manifest their life by bearing fruit, so all true Christians bear the fruits of humility, faith, and active benevolence. (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

4. All who are Christ's by faith, may go to Him for whatever blessings they need.

They who are united to Christ here are *safe*, for He will not allow them to be disconnected from Him, and where He is, there will they be; but they who are not thus united are not safe, but will be cast away like dried boughs and be destroyed.